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While You are a Girl

Lily Rice Foxcroft

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THOSE WHO BRING SUNSHINE TO
THE LIVES OF OTHERS CANNOT
KEEP IT FROM THEMSELVES

James M. Barrie

WHILE YOU ARE A GIRL

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WHILE YOU ARE A GIRL

BY

LILY RICE FOXCROFT

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TO

F. F.

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I

AT SCHOOL

I

AT SCHOOL

HOW pretty your daughter looks this morning!" said the Dressmaker, as she stepped briskly upstairs with her heavy bag. Priscilla was doing a little volunteer dusting for me, before school, and as she stood on the porch shaking her duster, her fresh shirtwaist and old-rose tie, "with youth and spring," as the Dressmaker said, did make a pretty combination.

"Would you be a girl again if you could?" I asked.

The Dressmaker laughed her hearty, sensible, tolerant laugh. "No," she said, "I wouldn't be as foolish as I used to be for worlds, and I know I should be just as

foolish if I went back. Everybody has to learn for herself."

Usually I agree with the Dressmaker, who is a whole Sunshine Club in herself as she goes her helping round. But this time I think she is mistaken. Many things everybody *must* learn for herself, of course — hard, bitter, burned-in lessons sometimes — but everybody can learn *some* things from the experience of others. Else how would the world grow wiser? So I keep on talking to Priscilla.

If I could be a girl again — and know what I know now — I would work harder, and behave better, at school.

The record we made at school follows us longer than most young people suppose, and rises up to do us good or harm when we had almost forgotten it. Priscilla's present teachers will be questioned about her, not merely when she is looking for her first position, but when she is trying to change to a better place,

five years later. A good record helps a long time, and a poor record hinders. It is all perfectly fair, and one of the rules of life.

When my neighbor, Mrs. Kendall, consulted our High School Principal, the other day, about Gladys' trying to take the course in three years, he surprised her by saying, "She can't go out much evenings if she undertakes it — Emma and Jane went out too much evenings." Emma and Jane, at the other end of the family from Gladys, are through college now, and would be surprised and indignant to know that the giddiness of their high-school days was remembered against them. But the Principal — a tactless, blunt man, we mothers think — went on to add, with fervor, that he should never forget how bad Jane's Latin Prose was.

For my teachers' sake, as well as for my own, I would work harder, if I could live my school-days over again. "How did you enjoy it?"

I said to Miss Jones, last week, as our Woman's Club was breaking up after a lecture that had called out unusual laughter and applause. Miss Jones is one of the most popular teachers in town, well up in her subject, a splendid disciplinarian and yet full of fun — what the boys call "all right." She has perfect health, and the even, cheerful temper that perfect health gives — the last woman to take a gloomy view of anything.

"To tell the truth," she answered, "I couldn't keep my mind on it. I was trying to think whether there was anything in the world I could do to make my boys and girls take hold of their Algebra better."

When I reported the incident at supper, Priscilla could hardly believe it.

"Do you mean that Miss Jones worries about us?" she said. "I never dreamed of such a thing."

"You never dreamed, I suppose," said I, "that you could do anything

for Miss Jones but hang about her at recess, and take her flowers, and send her Christmas cards. What would really count for something would be to give her your cooperation. The difference in effort and strain between teaching idle, careless pupils and teaching conscientious, painstaking ones might easily make a difference of years in a teacher's life. Of course there'll *always* be *some* difficult pupils. But *you* ought to make a point of being an easy one."

I remember perfectly the moment when I first began to have a faint realization of what it meant to a teacher to have a class do well. We were in the midst of preparations for our own graduation, and full of our little perturbations about badges and bows and positions for our hands and feet.

"Oh, sha'n't you be glad when it is all over?" we were saying to each other, at rehearsal. The teacher who was drilling us said, half under

her breath, "I shall be glad, too," and we thoughtless young things turned on her in wonder and said, "Why! do *you* dread it, too?"

"I suppose I dread it more than any of you," she answered. Talking it over, at home, that night, my father explained to me that it was hard for a teacher to hold her place, among the crowds that wanted it, and that to have her pupils make a poor appearance on graduation day might easily tip the scale against her reappointment. To us, the great occasion meant a little more or a little less of praise from doting friends. To her, it meant her bread-and-butter. I have never forgotten that.

With it I always connect the experience of a college classmate of mine, who fitted herself to teach, and whose family greatly needed the help that her salary was to bring. She was a delicate girl, and it was her fate to begin in a hard room, with mischievous boys and giggling girls, and a week of it broke her

down. She was counted a failure, and could never get a footing again in the profession she had looked forward to, but has spent all these years since at uncongenial work. Now, of course, I do not say that the responsibility for that disappointed life rests on any single one of those students, but I do think it is pretty clear that six or eight more steady, reliable boys or girls in that room might have saved the day. If I were a girl again, I would try to be among my teacher's "stand-bys," and no fear of being called a "pet" or a "prissy" should prevent me. I would try, out of ordinary, decent kindness of heart, and sense of fair play, whether I liked that particular teacher or not.

Fathers and mothers care more than the boys and girls realize about their record at school. The whole load of the day seems lightened when there is a good card to be passed about the table at night and the seventy per cents of last month

have worked up to eighties. It is the "last straw" to a tired man if he hears that a "note" has been sent home, and a parent must go to talk with the principal, or an effort must be made to see that the pupil gives more attention to her home-lessons. If I were a girl again, I'd make those "efforts" myself, and save my father and mother the anxiety. "Keeping Gladys to her study-hours is the hardest work I have to do," says Mrs. Kendall. It is work Mrs. Kendall never ought to have to do. She has work enough of her own, and a large part of it is done for Gladys. If I were in Gladys' place, I would try to keep up my end. I would carry my school work steadily and bravely, as my father carried his business and my mother her household cares, and I'd realize that they had as much right to be ashamed of a daughter who was lazy at school as I should have to be ashamed of a shiftless mother or a loafing father.

If I were in school again, I would bring the highest motive of all to bear on my work — I would try to do it, as Milton said, "ever as in my great Taskmaster's eye." A teacher once told me of her astonishment at learning that a certain girl in her room had become a church-member some months before.

"I couldn't believe," she said, "that anyone who professed to be a Christian could be so troublesome at school." No doubt the girl would have been pained and perhaps resentful at the criticism, but she had certainly given occasion for it. Probably, as she took her new pledges, she thought of her responsibilities toward friends of her own age. But she had not once thought of her teachers as among those whom her influence might affect.

II

TEMPERS AND TONGUES

II

TEMPERS AND TONGUES

IF I could begin over again, I would learn to manage my tongue better. I confess this out of a full heart, for with girlhood thirty years away and my own girls looking on and listening, I'm well aware that I still say many things that I ought not. "I told you so," in one or another of its exasperating forms, seems always trembling on the tip of my tongue. "I *thought* it looked like rain," "I was *afraid* those sweet-peas weren't planted deep enough," "I *knew* Helen wouldn't care for that book," "I felt *sure* you wouldn't like that hat after you got it trimmed" — oh, dozens of such things! I think I do usually keep them back, but it

is more of a struggle than it would have been if I had set about it earlier.

Mother, maybe, will be forgiven for an "I told you so," now and then. But from one girl to another they are very hard to bear. They almost always go with that self-satisfied, complacent temper that makes a girl boastful — another undesirable and unpopular trait. Gladys Kendall has it highly developed, and Priscilla — who is not a very patient sufferer — comes home almost every day in a state of irritation after the walk up from school. If Priscilla has allowed herself to express enthusiasm over a ball game, Gladys has been to so many that she is really tired of them. We take our western cousins for a harbor trip, and Gladys enquires whether we didn't find the crowd on the boat very "common." We spend half a hot spring day in the stores, looking for the shade of military blue that Pris covets at the modest price her allowance permits, and when the suit appears for the

first time, Gladys remarks that she thought of that color but her cousin from New York said it wasn't being worn. If Priscilla, fresh from a visit to her favorite aunt, incautiously launches forth into a description of the pretty new house, Gladys' uncle has just built one much larger. And so it goes.

Belittling others is in the same line. The girl who takes the credit of her own good marks to herself ought not to insinuate that those of another girl are due to help at home. But she is sometimes mean enough to. Or a girl sings well, and an envious critic points out that she isn't taking the full course, and has plenty of time for music. A girl dresses becomingly, and it is explained that anybody could dress well who had as much to spend, whereas women who have lived long enough to know will promptly testify that the worst taste is often found with the most money. This petty spirit that grudges praise to others is

more common, I must think, among girls than boys. In fact, boys often comment on it, among themselves, as "a queer thing about girls."

There is a type of girl that says disagreeable things with a real pride in them, calling herself "frank," or "outspoken," or announcing that she believes in saying what she thinks. Of course there is really no more point in pouring out anything that happens to be in your mind, any time you happen to open your lips, than there would be in fetching from the pantry whatever was standing on the nearest shelf, if you wanted to make lemonade on the piazza after tennis — cold potatoes, maybe, and German mustard and marmalade. One is supposed to use some selection in the ingredients for one's talk.

These outspoken people give a great deal of pain. You have taken part in the school play, and are delightfully exhilarated as your friends crowd about you with their

congratulations; then comes the candid girl and tells you she is so glad you got through it so well — your voice trembled so all through the first act that she was afraid you were going to break down.

"Couldn't you get him to give you eye-glasses?" asks your frank friend, after you've exhausted the oculist's patience with your entreaties, "you're the image of your grandmother in those specs."

"You know I never *did* like Rob, if he *is* your brother," an outspoken acquaintance said to Priscilla, the other day. Candor, it seemed, could not much further go.

But "Evil is wrought from want of thought," says the poet, "As well as from want of heart." The overbearing and ill-natured people are not the only ones who do harm. The thoughtless people do almost more. At least they total more, because there are more of them. They pass on, lightly, gossip that affects others' happiness in a way they never in-

tended at all. Off goes the gun — *they* didn't know it was loaded!

A new family moved into our neighborhood last winter. The children were bright and attractive; they were liked at school, and soon had a pleasant group of friends. One day Priscilla came home pensive, with news that Gladys had met a girl who knew the Johnsons where they used to live, and said they went with a queer set, and weren't at all the sort of people she should have supposed Gladys would want to be seen with much. I advised Priscilla not to pass the tale along, and to try to take the Johnson girls at the estimate we had formed of them ourselves, which I had a good deal of confidence in by that time. But Gladys gave the story a generous circulation herself, and the popularity of the Johnsons was decidedly on the wane. Later we learned that the story was partly true — the mother had had a long sickness, and the children had been left too much

to themselves and had been less careful in their choice of friends and fun than they would have been under other circumstances. It was just to get away from those associations that the family had moved — since one suburb was as convenient as another to Mr. Johnson's business — and it did seem hard that they should be followed by exaggerated and unjust reports of them.

Almost worse was the experience that Mary Day had, only the dear girl fortunately doesn't know it. Mary Day is one of our Dorothy's summer-vacation friends; the girls are really very fond of each other, but they both hate writing letters, and they trust to chance for news of each other in the winter. About Christmas, we were all shocked to learn, from a common acquaintance, that poor Mary had a fatal disease, was aware of it, kept up the most wonderful courage, but would hardly live to another summer. The story was so circumstantially told that

we could not doubt it. Dorothy did not know what to do — she thought of writing, but what to say? She thought of sending flowers. But before she had made up her mind, she ran across another of the summer group, and was warned by No. 2 that No. 1 was always a frightful fibber! We were slightly cheered by that, but it was two months before we learned, from some one who knew all the facts, that Mary was then entirely well. She had been a little out of health, and there had been some unfavorable symptoms, but they had all disappeared. The anxiety we had felt didn't so much matter. But for Mary herself — *if* the report had reached *her*, *if* Dorothy had written, as she came so near doing, the shock to her, at a time when everything was not quite right and she knew it, might easily have made her much worse. Indeed, it might have made her as sick as we were told she was.

It is said of the brilliant woman

who founded Mt. Holyoke College that her rule was never to do anything which might do harm, unless she felt sure that *more* harm might come from her *not* doing it. For "do" read "say," and you have a first-rate rule for speech. But it is a hard one to follow. The impulse to share a piece of news seems almost irresistible. Each one of us wants to tell at least one other, "in confidence." And then that one person whom we have told in confidence, finds the desire to tell just as strong as we found it, and so one more is told, and another link is added to the chain. What is really needed is a non-conductor to break the current.

III

MANAGING MONEY

III

MANAGING MONEY

MOST young people, nowadays, have a regular sum given them for their small expenses, for "pocket-money"; many have allowances that include their clothes; now and then one hears of a college girl whose parents entrust to her the entire sum that is to cover her tuition, board, laundry bills, traveling expenses and the rest; very rare indeed is the girl who must go to her father or mother for every nickel or quarter she chances to want. There has been a great change in this respect within the last forty or fifty years — partly because money is circulating more freely in the community, but principally because parents have become impressed with

the need that their children should learn early to handle money, and also with the pleasure that handling it gives them.

Sometimes I wonder whether this experiment that so many households are making, on a larger or smaller scale, is succeeding as we hoped it would. The young people are having the pleasure, sure enough. But are they learning the lesson? Is the systematic habit of the parents met by a corresponding punctiliousness on the part of the boys and girls? The father is careful to have the fixed sum ready at the beginning of the month. Is the daughter equally careful not to overdraw toward the end? If she is not, then the whole arrangement is one-sided, and unfair, and as different as possible from what real life will be when she has to meet it. She is not learning to be businesslike, but unbusinesslike, and is probably worse off, as to practical fitness for later years, than if she had kept up her childish

habit of running to papa when she wanted a penny. That, at least, she knew *was* childish, and she meant to outgrow it sometime.

Mrs. Gates laments to me that Mildred never can get a suit out of her allowance, though they think it a liberal one. Gloves, shoes, hats and waists she seems equal to, but a suit upsets all her calculations. I suspect the truth is that she doesn't really begin the calculations till the suit is almost in sight. Of course she ought to be saving for it for two or three months. Instead of that, she spends carelessly for a lot of little trifles in the "between season" when she should scarcely spend at all, and comes square up to the suit with nothing on hand. Heads of families know that the secret of good management is in making the light months store up for the heavy ones. Of course the Gateses can't see Mildred sweltering in her winter suit in June, and the money is "advanced." But an employer, five

years hence, won't do that for Mildred. Her husband, probably, will try to do it, but it will perplex and harass him as the breadwinner for a household ought not to be harassed.

A successful business-woman, writing in one of our popular magazines, speaks sternly on this point. "For fourteen years," she says, "I have worked among what might be termed average American men, decent, clean-cut, ambitious, home-loving chaps. I have watched callow clerks attain responsible positions and families of their own. I have seen a few senior workers strike a big idea or grasp an unusual opportunity, and branch out on independent lines. I have seen more of them walk the treadmill of monotonous routine work, uncomplainingly, year in and year out. And in two instances I have seen them suddenly fling themselves from the treadmill and plunge over the brink into disgrace and oblivion. Those who succeeded credited their wives with the full share of their

success. Those who walk the treadmill do not talk. In the other two instances, all of us saw the white but relentless hand of the wife pushing the husband closer, closer to the abyss."

The smaller allowance for pocket-money only, which most girls have, still gives a chance for prudence and planning. There are the birthdays and Christmases to look ahead for, and the up-to-date girl will have her little hoard ready when the time for spending comes, and will not be begging — or even borrowing — of papa the money to buy his present. Graduation expenses seem pretty formidable to most families, and the girl who can surprise her mother with a little contribution of her own for shoes or sash will be touched to find how keenly it is appreciated.

An account-book — next to a conscience — is the best possible check on careless spending. The model account-book, of course, is balanced regularly, at the end of the month

or week or day. Priscilla, like most beginners, finds difficulty in balancing, but we encourage her to keep on with the book. It is good for her to know where part of her money has gone, even if she can't account for it all. She admits that it surprises her to see how many little things she has bought that she didn't really need, or even care for, simply because they caught her eye. Her Aunt Adelaide, who combines prudence and generosity to the admiration of the whole family, advises her to make it an inflexible rule, when she goes shopping, never to buy anything that she hadn't thought of before she left home.

"If you'd needed it badly, you *would* have thought of it," she argues. And she tells Priscilla that what *she* has spent in twenty years for things she "happened to see" wouldn't amount to five dollars — except, of course, when she was traveling, and picking up odd trifles to bring home was part of the trip.

Aunt Adelaide detests "must haves." Last winter Priscilla felt she "must have" some real angora mittens, because "all the girls" were having them. (The number proved to be four when Rob called for the count.) This spring she "must have" silk stockings for the same reason.

"You don't find out what you 'must have,'" says Aunt Adelaide, "by looking at other people. You find out by looking into your own pocket-book. The 'must' is right there — only, more likely, it's a 'must *not*.'"

In America, as Aunt Adelaide says, girls in moderate circumstances, and poor girls as well, are brought into closer contact with girls who are really rich than they are in any other country. We call this democratic mingling a fine thing. But it won't be a fine thing if it leads the poorer girl to feel that she must strain every nerve to keep up with the richer one, and make not only herself but her whole family miser-

able by the effort. It won't be a fine thing unless the poorer girl can have independence and spirit enough to go quietly on according to the standard set by her own purse. A really true and deep friendship will survive in spite of differences. The slighter, superficial intimacies may as well be left to languish.

After all, it is not because Priscilla's "must haves" tempt her to discontent and extravagance that I am most afraid of them. It is because they show such a failure to appreciate what the genuine necessities of life — the true "must haves" — really are. Priscilla has never known what it was to be without comfortable clothes or sufficient food. I fancy there are girls even in her own class at school who would be more vigorous if they could be more generously fed. I am sure there are girls who would be in better health now if they had worn heavier suits last winter. How petty and trivial, to any of those girls, would seem

Priscilla's solicitude about angoras and fancy hose!

"Having food and raiment," said St. Paul, "let us be therewith content." I want Priscilla to learn that lesson early. And I want her to feel a responsibility for sharing even the small sums at her disposal now, with those who have less. I want her to be a generous giver. If she does not begin now, regularly and conscientiously, when will it be easier? As she grows older, she will handle more money, but she will have to make it cover more expenses. Unless she can save and give now, I am afraid she will never be able to.

IV

DAUGHTERS AND MOTHERS

IV

DAUGHTERS AND MOTHERS

IF I could be back at home again with my dear mother, I would be a great deal more careful about little things — things that seemed little then, but seem so large now, when my chance is gone.

Mother's work-basket — I remember so well how she liked to have it left, with the needles all straight in the clumsy needle-book that Sister Adelaide made for her when she first began to sew, fine needles on one of its flannel pages and coarse on the other, and each spool with the end of its thread firmly fastened into its crotch. I can just hear Mother's gentle sigh as she would say, "My work-basket doesn't look very tidy

today," after one of us had descended upon it like a young whirlwind. It always seemed to me a personal peculiarity of Mother's, harmless and rather amusing, but not to be taken at all seriously. But now that I am the owner of the family work-basket myself, I see things differently. When Rob rushes in from ball-practise to have a trousers-button sewed on, and I have to calm his impatience while I hunt through two boxes instead of one because Priscilla can never observe the distinction between buttons and hooks-and-eyes, I see that our untidiness was more than a sentimental grief to Mother — it was a real, practical inconvenience.

It is odd how history repeats itself, even in domestic life. Our little bedrooms were on the third floor — Adelaide's and mine — and Mother had the habit of laying on the stairs things of ours that she found round, always with the hope that we would carry them up when

we went. She used to say, sometimes, "Girls, I don't see how you *can* go up so often without taking up those things." But we could. Now, in my own house, the third floor is Priscilla's domain and Rob's, and day after day the stairs are adorned with books, letters, shoes, bath-robes and collars from the laundry — a motley and ridiculous assemblage, if we hadn't become hardened to it. But now and then some outsider is unexpectedly brought up on to the second floor, and I can see that my apologies don't really excuse me to her, nor prevent her carrying away the feeling that I am not a nice housekeeper.

The mothers get the blame — that is what the girls don't realize. If they did, they would take more pains, I am sure. More pains about their own manners, for example. Priscilla came home from the missionary tea, the other day, greatly surprised because a new neighbor,

whom none of us had met before, was such a charming woman.

"Why should you be so surprised?" I said. "Papa told us Mr. Curtis seemed very pleasant."

Then it came out that Sally Curtis was a noisy, showy girl — "really almost cheap," Priscilla said — and Pris had taken for granted her mother "couldn't be much." After seeing the mother, it became quite plain that Sally was what she was in *spite* of her mother, not *because* of her. On acquaintance Sally will very likely prove to be one of those "good-hearted" girls whom time will temper and refine. But meanwhile, other people besides Priscilla will be judging her mother by her.

Mothers are so busy and so hurried, and small hindrances count so much — I am sure the girls don't realize that either. Mother does not have to connect with a train or a school-bell, and so it is assumed that she alone of all the family has plenty of time. But she has to

crowd as much work into her day as any of them do, and to be obliged to lose time needlessly is as exasperating to her as it is to the others.

"I don't seem to be able to keep a pencil on my desk," my mother used to say plaintively. It comes back to me now, when I hurry down to the door to sign for a package, and the expressman has worn the point off his, and there is none on the telephone stand as there ought to be, and I toil heavily upstairs to find none on my writing-table, and remember that I saw Priscilla fly in, light as a bird on her young feet, and snatch up something as she started for school — my pencil without a doubt.

But Priscilla is a dear child, and saves me steps enough in other ways, and I ought not to complain of her. She has the nicest little habit of tidying up at odd minutes — it rests her, she says, from studying. She has a perfect genius for setting to rights, and to come into a room that

I thought must wait over till another day, and find it all spick and span, is a delightful surprise. Willing help gives mothers such exquisite pleasure, and grudging help is so trying.

"I'd rather do a thing myself a dozen times over than ask Gladys to do it," poor Mrs. Kendall complained to me, the other day. "She never seems to have any time for anything I want."

If I were young again, I am sure I would carry umbrellas more amiably, and I think I would wear rubbers with less fuss! Gladys would be very indignant if any one told her so, but all her mother's friends believe that worry over her was at the bottom of Mrs. Kendall's nervous breakdown, last year. Gladys is very self-willed, and opposing her is strenuous work, and over-taxing for a delicate woman. She *would* wear pumps all winter; she *would* put on a cotton frock the very first mild day; she *would* go skating before the ice was pronounced safe; she

would take the canoe out when it looked like a squall — she kept her mother in a state of apprehension from one end of the year to the other. Some mothers would have thrown it off more lightly than Mrs. Kendall did, of course. Gladys used to speak in a superior way about "mother's worrying," as if it were a weakness which she was thankful *she* didn't share. But at least Mrs. Kendall worried out of affection. Gladys went her own headstrong way out of sheer selfishness.

I am not much of a dreamer, and I seldom remember my dreams. But there is one dream that I have dreamed over and over again — thirty times I think I must have dreamed it, in the years since my mother died. I dream that she comes back to us, dear and loving as she used to be, and we are all together at home, and everything begins again. Then, all at once, we are going somewhere together, and Mother has nothing nice to

wear — always it is Mother — and we search and search, and all her clothes are shabby — and we girls have plenty, all fresh and new — and we are so sorry and ashamed — and I wake up.

I cannot truly say that I think there is any *special* reason why such a distressing dream should be sent to me. I do not think Adelaide and I were more selfish and grasping than most girls. But the dream has made me think that perhaps many girls are more selfish and grasping than they realize.

In rich families, of course, where there is enough for everyone, there is never any question about the mother's being as well dressed as the daughters — indeed, it is perfectly well understood that the mother's gowns and furs and jewels will be *more* costly than would be appropriate for the daughters. But with families in moderate circumstances, where it is not so simple for the father to provide new outfits all

round as the seasons change, I suspect it is quite often the mother who is the last to be supplied, who pretends that it would be too cool for her to put on a spring suit now if she had it, who says that the hats all seem so ugly, she can't make up her mind to buy one yet. And quite likely, instead of seeing through their mother's unselfish little wiles, the girls take her at her word, and perhaps feel a bit disturbed because she cares so little about looking up-to-date, and resolve that they will avoid that error, when they get to be middle-aged.

Really, the girls haven't the slightest idea how much the mothers care. They care a great deal more than the girls do, if the truth were but known. Hidden away in the farthest corner of every mother's heart is oh, such a longing to have her children proud of her, such a fear that she may not please them, may not come up to their standard! She feels it especially when they begin to go away

— if it is no further than the High School — and make different friends from those they have played with all their lives, and bring them home. If I were a girl again, I would praise my mother more, and save the nice things my friends said about her to tell her.

V

A GOOD LISTENER

V

A GOOD LISTENER

A GOOD talker may be more admired, but a good listener is more loved. That is what really counts, after all.

Sometimes the two talents are combined — listening and talking. Then you have a very popular person, and a very useful one. Priscilla's Cousin Edmund, who is one of the liveliest boys that ever came out of college, is an extremely charming listener, and one day some one told him so. "Well," he said, laughingly, "it would be a pity if a fellow as fond of talking as I am, didn't know that other people liked a chance to talk too!"

"*A chance to talk too*" — that *is*

what a great many people like, and what some are actually pining for. Priscilla has just been put on the Visiting Committee of our Endeavor Society, and she made great preparations for her first round of calls. She took flowers with her, and two or three books to read aloud from, and she had in store quite an assortment of local gossip to impart to her "Shut-ins." She came home amused and a little chagrined. Things had turned out differently from her expectations.

"Why! they didn't care at all about hearing me talk," she said; "they wanted to talk themselves."

Of course they did — poor, forlorn beings, with everybody in their families too busy to listen or too bored to pretend an interest! Pris had spent an hour with one old gentleman, looking at the boxes and checker-boards he makes to amuse himself — they aren't quite perfect enough to sell — and hearing how he picked up the odd pieces of wood that he uses for them. She had had

a very good time, and had been urged to come again, and I could well believe that the invitation had been a sincere one.

The grandfathers and grandmothers in our homes would often welcome a good listener. Many of them are very lonely because, in breaking up the old homes and coming to live with the married sons and daughters, they have left behind their whole group of friends and acquaintances. That is not so hard to do when one is young and makes new friends easily, but it is very hard indeed when one is old. When Mr. Gates' mother died, and his father sold the Iowa farm and came back east to spend the rest of his life, we all felt very sorry for the poor old man. We knew that Mr. Gates, busy in the city all day, would have little time to devote to him, and Mrs. Gates seemed to have her hands full already of responsibilities. We imagined he would find some pleasure with the smaller children, as grand-

papas often do; but no one thought of Mildred as likely to count for much. But it was amazing how they took to each other.

We don't know, to this day, whether it began as a duty on Mildred's part — if it was a duty, she took it up so gracefully that it seemed like a pleasure. We used to see them walking out together, in the late afternoon, Mildred pointing out things, and old Mr. Gates giving an alert attention, and evidently contributing opinions of his own. They gardened together, and the Gates' forlorn flower-beds began to blossom. Gradually, Mildred introduced her friends to him, always with such a pretty pride — "I want you to meet my grandfather from the west" — and it became known among the young people that the old gentleman could tell first-rate stories of pioneer days. That, of course, was Mildred's special good fortune — not all grandfathers have the knack of making themselves

agreeable company for young people. But any grandfather would be happier for such companionship and appreciation as Mildred gave. Lately, Priscilla says, they have begun making a book of family genealogy together, and Mildred is writing down some of the incidents that her grandfather remembers. They are going over the old pieces of family furniture, and putting tags on the backs of the book-cases and pictures, to tell how old they are and what hands they have passed through; and their tags may really be prized, fifty years from now.

But it is not only for others' sake that I would practise the fine art of listening, if I could be a girl again — I would do it for my own sake. Listening to stories, told or sung, is one of the oldest ways of learning and preserving history, as the boys and girls will remember who took the trip to Washington, in their spring vacation, and saw in the entrance pavilion of the Congressional

Library, that fascinating group of panels, beginning with "The Cairn" and ending with "The Printing Press," which the artist has named "The Evolution of the Book." Now that the book has finally been evolved, we have at hand more serviceable and accurate information than that Oriental story-teller could give to that eager group seated on the sand. But the spoken word still has an interest all its own. To listen to one whose memory goes back, not only beyond the bicycle and the street-car and the electric-light and the telegraph, but into the days of stage-coaches and candles and spills and quill pens and daguerreotypes and flintlock guns, makes the past more real than any book can make it.

"Can you remember the first steam-cars?" Priscilla asked Mildred's grandfather. "No," he answered, "but I can remember the first train from Worcester to Springfield. I remember an old neigh-

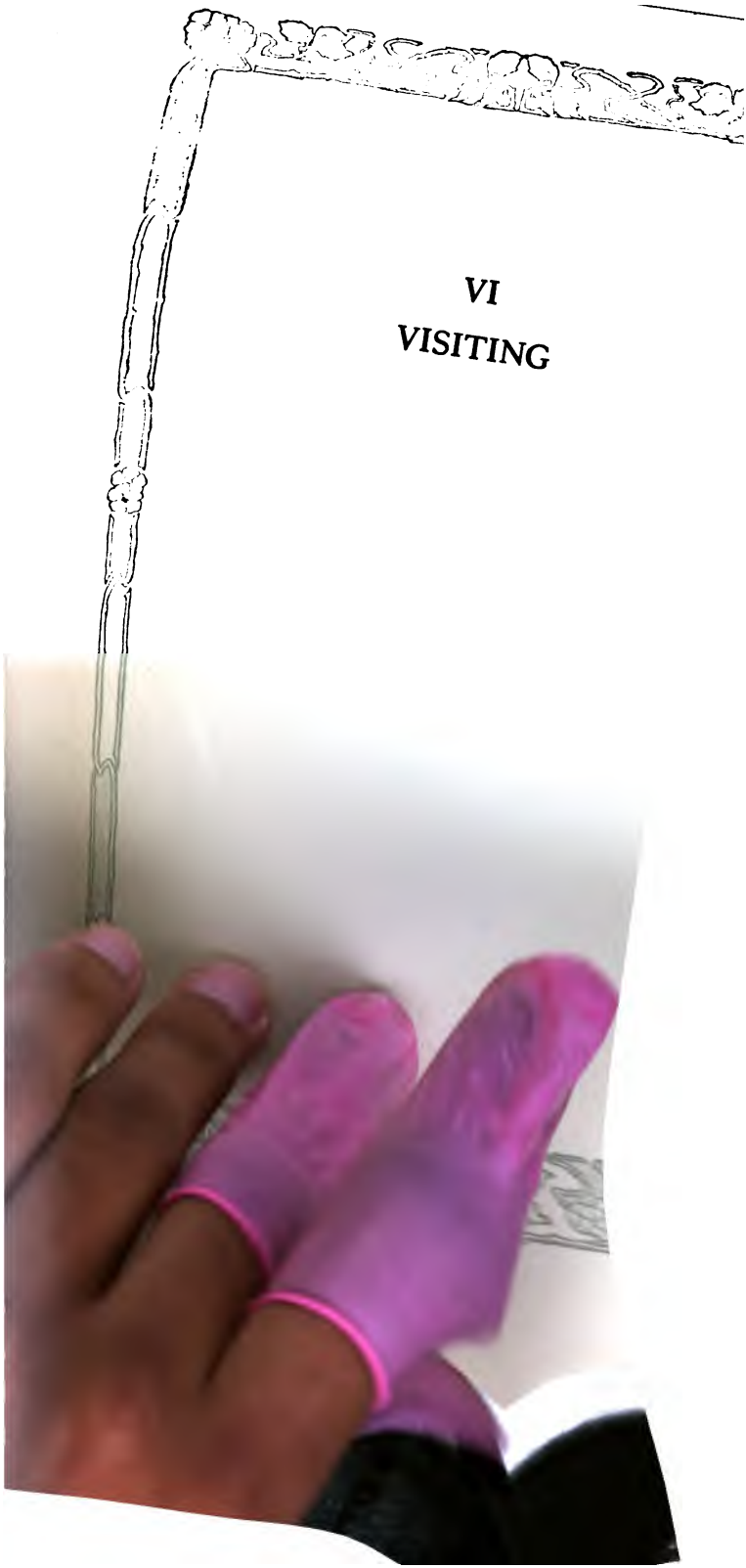
bor of ours saying: 'They say, "Breakfast in Boston and supper in Albany," but *I don't believe it.*'"

If I were a girl — or a boy either — I would make a systematic effort to hear speakers of real distinction. I have often heard my father express keen regret that he did not go to hear Daniel Webster, in his boyhood, when the great statesman spoke, not so many miles from his home. Even more deeply would one mourn having missed an opportunity to hear Abraham Lincoln. Cheap and easy transportation makes it possible to hear more notable speaking than was within the reach of ordinary people, a generation ago. The religious activities of the day are producing many speakers of high grade, and conventions and reduced rates are making it possible for our young people to hear oratory of the best sort. Such privileges are certainly worth far more than the effort they cost. We had a chance, in his centenary year, to

notice the pleasure with which people who were taken to hear Dickens lecture in their early childhood, recall the event. Experiences like these, as Browning says, stand out in one's memory like an eagle feather found in crossing blank miles of moor.

VI
VISITING

VI
VISITING



VI

VISITING

PRISCILLA has been having a visitor. It was not a convenient time, for both her father and I were unusually busy, and we dreaded the interruption and disturbance which even the easiest visitor makes. Pris was not insistent at all, and would have given up the plan in perfect good temper, which of course made us more disposed to let her carry it out. She met Frances Goodwin at the beach, last summer, and when she heard that she was coming on for the Convention, she thought it would be such fun to have her stay on afterward for a visit.

We were pleased with Fan before we saw her, from the note she wrote

accepting Priscilla's invitation. It came by return mail, which is always a boon to a hostess. Girls — and their mothers too, for that matter — quite too often put off answering till the last minute, which is very exasperating if one had wanted to make any other use of one's guest room, besides seeming unappreciative. Sometimes, if they're not coming, they don't write at all, or not till the date is wholly gone by.

But Frances wrote promptly, thanking not only Priscilla, but me, for the invitation, and spoke of looking forward to seeing all of us — those trifles which do show that a girl has been "well brought up." She was explicit about her train, so that we knew just when to meet her; and preferred to walk from the station, though Pris suggested the depot-carriage. She had that capable, efficient way about everything. It was refreshing, for we have had young people staying with us who never seemed to make the right

connections and were always getting carried by, or leaving the street-cars at the wrong corner, and bothering others endlessly by their mistakes. Accidents, of course, one allows for, but carelessness is a different thing.

Frances was as prompt all through her visit as she had been at the beginning. She was always down in time for breakfast — a model to Priscilla, it must be confessed. Even when they had been out the night before, and I had suggested that they might sleep late — as I did, once or twice — Fan was always smilingly sure that they should wake up anyway and might as well get up and could take a nap later, if they needed it. And it certainly made things run a great deal more smoothly in the house, to be able to get the breakfast dishes out of the way at the usual time. It was the same when we were going anywhere — she was always the first to be ready, and we had none of that impatient standing about, wait-

ing for the guest whom it is not quite courteous to hurry.

The way she fitted in was astonishing. One would have thought she had been studying our tastes for years. I was so tried when Priscilla had Mabel Newcomb here, last summer, by her want of tact. Priscilla's father always goes straight for the hammock, when he comes home, and the few minutes' rest that he gets in it, before supper, seems just what he needs to give him an appetite after the hot, hard day. Whoever happens to be in it always rises, as a matter of course, as soon as he comes in sight. We have several big chairs on the piazza, and the steps make good seats, too, with cushions — there is plenty of room for everybody. But I suppose it never occurred to Mabel that she wasn't entitled to the hammock at one hour of the day as well as another. My husband would drag himself up the steps, all heated and worn, and look about in vague discomfort —

it was days before he realized what was different from usual, though I knew, the first time it happened — sit a little while in one of the chairs, and then wander indoors for his chance to "stretch out." I thought it would surely occur to Mabel, sometime, to say "Wouldn't *you* like the hammock?" But it didn't.

After supper, it was the same way with the easy chair in the living room. Mabel always appropriated it in the daytime, and she kept right on in the evening. If it had been a question only of the young people, of course the guest would have been entitled to the best, but older people take precedence, even in their own homes. Poor Mabel! she would have been dreadfully hurt if she had known how glad I was to see her go.

She didn't go when we expected, either. She stayed on and on, waiting till some other friends were ready to have her come to them. That was partly Priscilla's fault, for she assured Mabel it would be all right,

but Mabel ought not to have hinted for Priscilla's invitation. Nothing but an invitation from me ought to have kept her. Girls are absurdly careless about such matters. Looking at things from their own standpoint, it never seems to occur to them that a family could have any other friends whom they might want to see.

I remember how amused her father and I were years ago, when Dorothy went with a party of college friends to spend a week at the shore, in a cottage belonging to the father of one of the girls. She was asked definitely for the week, but she left home so confident that she should stay longer if she liked it, that we didn't look for her at all when Saturday came. Great was our surprise, late in the evening, when she appeared, bringing with her a girl whose home was so far away that she couldn't reach it that night. A letter from the father had come in the morning mail, taking for granted

that they were breaking up that day, and telling them to be sure to leave things in good order, because he was bringing down a party of his friends for the week-end. His daughter had been dreadfully chagrined, and all the girls felt highly indignant, but my husband and I thought it an excellent joke, and one that pointed a moral for Dorothy.

"Don't make them twice glad," my grandmother used to say, when any of us set off for a visit. But there was no question of being glad when Frances went. Everyone of us had grown fond of her, even Rob. Mabel made a fatal blunder with him the first night she came. Rob was sitting perfectly rigid with shyness, and making the fewest possible motions for fear he should spill or drop something, and Mabel leaned across the table and addressed him directly. "Don't you live by eating?" she said. She meant to be friendly, of course, but Rob felt himself made fun of, and he never

forgave her. But Fan seemed to know by instinct when to let him alone, and somehow, at odd moments, found their common interests, and finally won his entire confidence and admiration by climbing out onto the roof of the L with him to see his "wireless" outfit.

She had that tact about everything. Everything we had or did seemed extra-pleasant, because she appreciated it so much. It was always the pleasant things that she noticed and commented on. Some visitors, you know, always give you advice. If you're making sandwiches, they tell you a new way. But Frances praised *our* sandwiches.

She fell in so simply with our Sunday habits. I always dread Sunday a little, when the children have visitors. We enjoy the day very much, in our own way, and it is disturbing to have a visitor propose things that we are not in the habit of doing. I don't know now whether

we are "stricter" than Frances' people at home, or not. She didn't make any comment. She simply took up our routine as if it was exactly what suited her best, went to the services with us, and busied herself with our quiet pleasures betweentimes. Priscilla happened to hear, after Frances had gone, that some girls from another part of the town, who had met her at the Convention, had suggested coming up on Sunday afternoon to call on her, and Fan had asked them if they would mind coming Monday instead, because she didn't know what our plans for Sunday might be.

I was particularly glad that she said so many nice things about our church. A visitor's criticism often counts for a good deal, and if Frances had thought the sermon dull, or the singing poor, or the Sunday-school superintendent queer, Priscilla would have remembered it a long time. But Fan liked them all, in that cheerful, happy way she had. I

doubt very much whether she realized what she was doing, but it was actually true that every good influence was strengthened by her visit. It seemed wonderful that one week could mean so much.

VII

VACATION MANNERS

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VACATION MANNERS

PRISCILLA and I are just back from the country. I always think it specially beautiful in its first summer freshness, with the young foliage drooping over streams that run full after the spring rains; and the Mountain View proved as comfortable and homelike a boarding-place as could have been found. But our first week was completely spoiled by Gladys.

I ought to have known better than to take Gladys with us, of course. But Mrs. Kendall has so many cares, and is so delicate, that when she told me she didn't feel equal to taking Gladys away this summer, — and yet she couldn't bear to have

the child lose her little trip, — I very foolishly offered to let her go with us. I didn't do it without consulting Priscilla — I was not so inconsiderate as that! I've known girls to detest each other for life, simply because the older people in their families had insisted on throwing them together, regardless of their lack of congeniality. Oh, no, I consulted Priscilla! She felt as I did that it would be pleasant to help Mrs. Kendall, and we both thought that, with all outdoors to scatter in, we needn't find Gladys much in the way. But we did have discretion enough to ask her only for the first week, and reserved the second for ourselves. We needed it — to recover in.

Really, I shouldn't have believed there were so many ways for a girl to make trouble. To begin with, Gladys found fault with everything. She complained of the food, which was plain, but as good as we were paying for. She made interminable

comparisons, in her high-pitched, slangy style, between the Mountain View and some New York hotel where she had once stayed for a day or two with a rich uncle and aunt. She was peremptory with the waitress, and sent back steak because it was too well done, and eggs because they were too rare, with a manner which I suppose she thought marked her as an experienced traveler, but which I considered extremely pert and ill-bred. She came in very late to her meals, which was not the habit in a simple boarding-house like ours, and then lingered as long over her courses as if she had sat down at a reasonable time. If I had been going to have her with me all summer, I should have tried to drop a gentle hint, but just for one week, it didn't seem worth while. But one week was enough to make her unpopular with all the "help."

I was distressed at the way she used to leave her room. It was the chambermaid's business to put it

in order, of course. But there are some things one ought not to expect a chambermaid to do, unless one is prepared to give her a very special "tip" for having served one as lady's-maid as well. Hanging up one's clothes, for example, and straightening out one's toilet articles, and wringing out one's wash-cloth from the sudsy water in the bowl. Everything of that personal character ought to be personally disposed of, if possible.

There is a kind of neatness possible to a room, before breakfast, that is as unmistakable and almost as attractive, as the neatness of later in the day. But to leave one's bed with the very shape of the sleeper in it, as a cat might, is to make the task of the person who puts it to rights needlessly unpleasant.

Gladys never paid any attention to these little niceties. She annoyed me by running about the halls in her kimono more freely than I liked. To be sure, the kimono was a pretty one,

and very becoming, and one might argue that it covered her as decorously as a lingerie waist. But the kimono is a lounging-robe, and is associated with the toilet, and a really refined woman remembers the fact, and does not allow herself to be seen in it except by her family, unless in one of those emergencies that excuse everything.

Gladys' clothes were a constant exasperation to me. I don't expect to dictate to my young people, but I do think it good manners for a girl to ask advice now and then, especially away from home. But Gladys always felt perfectly equal to deciding for herself. She did not even consult with Priscilla, which seemed to me really queer. When girls are together in that way, I think it looks well for them to dress, not alike exactly, but on the same principle. At home, we think the Johnson girls manage so nicely about that. If one goes to church in a muslin, the other does. If one dresses

"informally" for a party, so does the other. To see two girls start out together, from the same house, one in silk and the other in gingham, makes you feel as if both were not equally well provided for, or one were trying to outshine the other, or, at least, as if they couldn't agree.

Gladys and Priscilla certainly gave that unpleasant impression, all the time we were at the Mountain View! If Priscilla happened to ask her what she meant to wear, Gladys would always say, "Oh, I haven't made up my mind yet!" I really think it was because she was set on wearing her more elaborate things, and knew I shouldn't advise it. Both the girls had had their first "evening" dresses, in the spring, for a wedding, and they had brought them in their trunks, but I soon saw there wasn't likely to be any chance for them to wear them. Imagine my feelings when Gladys, the last night she was there, came down to supper — it wasn't dinner at the Mountain View — in

hers. She came in even later than usual. The young people had been off for a long ride in the mountain wagon, and most of them only ran upstairs for a fresh blouse. It was one of the charms of the Mountain View that we needed so little time to dress, and could stay outdoors till the very last minute. When Gladys' pink chiffon appeared in the doorway, just as the rest were getting up, it made a decided sensation. I suppose she took the little stir for applause. But it wasn't.

But clothes were not my worst trial. Gladys' natural selfishness showed itself in a dozen little ways that I should never have noticed, I suppose, if I hadn't felt responsible for her and felt that our party was being judged by her. She always took more than her share of things. She and her partner would keep the tennis-court for a half-day together, with a group of people on the piazza growing more impatient and indignant every minute.

The partner was a problem, himself — one of our boarders, but not one whom I happened to know. It didn't occur to Gladys to introduce him to me, but after she had been constantly with him for two half-days, I asked her to, and she most ungraciously did. He seemed a well-mannered boy, quite at his ease, and I rather think introductions to chaperones were more in his line than in Gladys'. I fancy it often happens so — a boy is thrown with a girl whose ways are more free-and-easy than those he is used to, and he shows no surprise and attempts no corrections — how could he? — but he has a lower opinion of the girl. I don't believe this boy's sister would have devoted hours at a time to a stranger as Gladys did to him, nor sat with a stranger on a boarding-house piazza till the very last of all the guests was waiting to go upstairs. That last guest was I, of course. I hovered about, making myself odious in Gladys'

eyes, no doubt. But I couldn't do less.

I remember distinctly the first time I learned, myself, that it was not always considered a triumph to be seen monopolizing the society of one young man. I was not quite grown up, and was a looker-on at a party given for an older cousin, and from my quiet corner viewed with the intensest admiration a tall, striking girl who actually kept the most attractive man in the room hanging about her the whole evening. When the party broke up, and we all sat around to "talk it over," I was amazed to hear the object of my envy characterized as unladylike. But I quite concur in the adjective now. To make one's self conspicuous in *any* way is ill-bred, and to make one's self conspicuous in *that* way is most ill-bred of all.

VIII

SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS

VIII

SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS

IF I were a girl again, I would certainly try to think less about myself. My first Harvard Class Day was spoiled for me by my self-consciousness. Class Days, I suppose, are the very grandest occasions a young girl can look forward to, and I was fresh from reading that fascinating description of Class Day at Harvard that Mr. Howells gives in "April Hopes."

It was not one of the students who invited me, which made my anticipations a little less keen, of course. But a professor's wife, — an old friend of my mother's — had asked me to spend two or three days with her, on purpose to show me the festivities. She had taken pains to

get invitations to several of the spreads for us, and she did everything she could to make it pleasant for me, and I *ought* to have enjoyed it. I had never been in Cambridge before, and the University buildings, the lawns, the decorations, the lights, the Glee Club, the Tree exercises, the lovely dresses and the pretty girls were worth coming miles to see, if only as a beautiful spectacle. If I could have realized, at the beginning, that I was to play just a spectator's part, I might have enjoyed it thoroughly.

But I had come with an absurd idea that I should be quite important myself, and when I saw that my dress was among the plainest, and that even the young men whom my hostess introduced were in a hurry to get back to their own friends, and had no time at all to spare for me, I fell into the sulks, and it was a most morose and unattractive young person, I am sure, whom kind Mrs. Lake dragged about with her through the

last part of the day. Of course it was all an old story to her, and she had gone just for my sake, which must have made my behavior particularly exasperating to her.

After it was too late, I was heartily ashamed of myself, and tried to hope that Mrs. Lake might not have noticed. I am ashamed still, though no doubt she forgot it all long ago. But I have learned since that my conduct — foolish as it was — was not so very unusual, and that there are a good many other girls just as vain and silly. Only last year, I took my niece to a Class Day, and it seemed to me I could see Alice going through exactly the same succession of moods — complacency, expectation, and disappointment, followed by unreasonable resentment toward me, her well-meaning and helpless chaperone.

But I have had experiences of just the opposite kind. I have taken girls to parties and picnics where they did not know many people and

did not have much "attention," and they had a good time in spite of the drawbacks.

It depends mostly on themselves, after all — the "good time." Clothes don't make nearly so much difference as many girls think. There is a discontented, sullen expression, that comes over the face of a girl who wants more attention than she is getting — a perfectly unmistakable expression, that can make the prettiest dress look ugly. But a bright, cheerful face attracts at once.

"You lose a great deal of pleasure, my dear," said an old uncle of mine, when I was a girl, "by being so afraid of making yourself ridiculous." He was quite right. I never could join heartily in Hallowe'en tricks, because I felt so awkward when the laugh was on me; nor play games, unless I was sure of playing them well. It was not because I was afraid of hurting myself if I fell, but because I was afraid of being laughed at, that I never succeeded in learn-

ing to skate. It was just so with swimming — the same miserable self-consciousness stood in my way.

When we were children, and came home from a day at the beach with Father, and sat down to sort over the pebbles we had collected, we were always disappointed because so few of them proved pretty enough to be worth keeping. Father used to laugh and say "Uncommonly pretty stones *aren't* very common." We always thought it was one of his jokes. But gradually we discovered there was a sermon in it. Uncommonly attractive girls *aren't* very common. If you think they are, if you want to be one yourself, the chances are against you. It is the same idea that the current slang puts more bluntly — "*You* are not the *only* pebble on the beach."

But why should you *want* to be? Why should you covet *more than your share* of popularity, or praise? You would be ashamed to confess yourself greedy about anything else.

Appreciation, admiration, affection — they *are* among the most desirable possessions in the world, but do you really want more of them than you are fairly entitled to? Do you want to take her share away from somebody else?

Call it what you please — self-consciousness, or vanity, or plain selfishness — the quality is always a blemish in character. Lovers of "The Idylls of the King" and "In Memoriam" always shrink from hearing the stories that are told of Tennyson's sensitiveness to criticism and his extraordinary fondness for praise. We feel instinctively that we cannot admire the poet so whole-heartedly if the stories are true, and we welcome any evidence that proves them exaggerated. In the case of a public man, it is almost fatal to his reputation to have it believed that egotism is the key-note of his nature, or that, as the ugly phrase puts it, "he has got the swelled head." The practical judgment of everyday people

agrees that the Apostle Paul was right when he urged every man "not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly."

"Handsome is that handsome does," the proverb used to say. I never quite believed it. But I have not doubted it for a moment since I saw the "girls" again, when I went back to college for my twenty-fifth reunion. We spoke of it over and over again, among ourselves. Girls whom we had not thought of as pretty at all, in college days, had come back with faces shining with earnestness and courage, and the joy of unselfish achievement or endurance, and we were astonished to find them beautiful. It was a strange object-lesson before us there, as we wandered about in the June sunshine beside the lake, and called back one memory after another. "Not to be ministered unto, but to minister" is the college motto. Our friends who had followed most closely in

the spirit of the pledge had proved the truth of those other words: "He that findeth his life shall lose it, but he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."

IX

SUPERSTITIONS

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SUPERSTITIONS

THE Club met with Priscilla last week. It was Mildred Gates' birthday, though not many of the girls knew it, and Pris thought it would be fun to surprise her with a birthday cake, and candles. So we gathered the girls into the dining-room, to get the full benefit of the celebration, instead of passing things in the parlor as we usually do, and brought in chairs. Everybody was very jolly, till one of the Johnsons happened to notice that there were thirteen at the table. Then the pleasure was spoiled for her. After we had talked and joked about it for a minute or two, she asked me if I would excuse her if she took her chair away from

the table, and she moved it over into the bay-window. There she seemed to feel perfectly safe, and ate her ice-cream and cake with as much zest as anybody. On the whole, I never saw a silly thing more simply and sensibly done. But I did think it a very silly thing. As if the Fate that was angered at seeing thirteen people grouped around a table would be propitiated by having one move three feet away!

I asked Priscilla, afterward, whether she thought any of the other girls had the same feeling. She thought there were two or three who were relieved when the unlucky number was reduced to twelve, though she didn't believe any of them cared enough to have made themselves so conspicuous. Then I remembered having the same thing happen years ago, at a Thanksgiving party, where we fixed it by moving back one of the babies' high-chairs. So I couldn't really blame these young people so much. Still,

for girls that prided themselves on being up-to-date!

But, when you once begin to be on the lookout for them, you're surprised to find how many old-fashioned superstitions young people still have. We used to notice that when Dorothy was bringing her college friends home on visits. Priscilla had just attained a room of her own, and her greatest pride was a glorious bunch of peacock-feathers that Aunt Adelaide had bestowed on her when she broke up house-keeping. Of course she always wanted the big girls to come in and see her room, and they were always as dear and sweet as big girls could be, and made a leisurely circuit of her walls, and admired everything. But it always ended in the same way, with their advising her to take down the peacock-feathers for fear of bad luck.

At first, I think the child was made a little uneasy, but she grew vexed, and then indignant and obstinate,

and ended by keeping them there long after she would have been glad to replace them with something newer — four or five years in all, I should think. Very bright years they were too, with far more than our share of family happiness as compared with many of our friends. But when Priscilla had scarlet-fever — a light case — we heard that Gladys Kendall attributed it to the peacock-feathers.

Of course many of the old superstitions are just harmless fancies, and rank with fairy-stories and Santa Claus. I don't suppose it hurts anyone to hunt for four-leaved clovers, or to try to count seven stars on seven consecutive nights, or to wish when they see a load of hay coming. If people like to say "Bread-and-butter," to prevent breaking friendship, when a group divides to go round a tree in their path, surely no one is foolish enough to think it anything but fun. But it does sometimes seem to me as if

the people who tapped on wood actually did it seriously. And I know that some sensible persons feel depressed when they spill the salt, or walk under a ladder, or see the moon over the wrong shoulder, for they have told me that they do.

If one enjoys wearing a garnet any better for calling it her "birth-stone," I don't object, though I wonder how many of the girls who do it could tell how and where the tradition originated. But when a grown woman explains to me, as one did not long ago, that her "birth-number" is four, and that she "vibrates" to that number, and that it corresponds to green in the spectrum, and that the more green she can have about her — in wall-paper, clothes, china, and what-not — the more fortunate her life will be, I certainly do think she is filling up her mind with a good deal of worthless trash.

To tell one's fortune from apple-seeds or daisy-petals is a pleasant

enough piece of childish play, but fortune-telling in real earnest — or in half-earnest — is bad business, and I do not like to have anything to do with it, in any form, under any pretext.

Mrs. Day dates the long, tedious illness that Mary had, last winter, from her having her fortune told at a charity fair. She had been getting a little over-tired, and they had sent her off for a visit, and the fair was one of the diversions. There was a fascinating fortune-teller — only they called her a palmist — with wonderful dark eyes, and real Oriental silks and gauzes — none of your cheap, home-made costumes — and all the girls were raving about her. When she looked at Mary's hand, the first thing she said was that a long, serious sickness was indicated, but that Mary would "overcome." There was more, of course, and the total was cheering, as it always is at fairs; but poor Mary couldn't think of anything but the

sickness, not even the "overcoming." If she had been at home, and her family had known about it, probably they could have laughed her out of it at once. But she didn't tell anyone — just got bluer and bluer, and worried and worried, all by herself, and couldn't sleep, and finally lost her appetite and gave up entirely. The doctor never could find any cause to account for so much listlessness and languor, and it wasn't till months after that the truth came out — Mary had really been "scared sick."

Sometimes this fortune-telling turns into deliberate swindling. Only this morning our city papers described the arrest of a fortune-teller and her husband, on the charge of getting money under false pretenses. Ignorant girls would come to the fortune-teller, and she would predict wealth for them, and would offer to direct them to a good investment. The husband posed as the secretary of a successful stock-com-

pany, and the credulous girls would entrust their savings to him, sometimes sums of several hundred dollars. Of course they never saw them again.

Perhaps you think that such swindles can only thrive in cities, where there are always plenty of ignorant, gullible people? But I am not so sure of that. I have known women who seemed intelligent enough in other ways, and were certainly able to carry on a good business and make a good living, who would consult a "clairvoyant" or a "trance-medium," if they lost a purse or a ring, or had a "run of bad luck."

But we live in a world of marvels, and many people have a vague idea that there is "something in" these strange things, and that by experimenting they may find it out. They forget that successful experiments must be made by those trained to them, by experts. In unskilled hands, they are only dangerous. I would as

soon see Priscilla and Rob trying to experiment with dynamite or the malaria-mosquito, by themselves, as with thought-transference, and crystal-gazing, mind-reading, mental telepathy, and all the rest. Even parlor games of that sort make me uneasy.

But it is not chiefly because of harm that may come to their health or their pocket-books that I fear any least taint of superstition in the minds of my children. It is because I know it must, sooner or later, influence their thought of God. And our thought of God is the most important thought we have, and reacts on all the others.

It is God's world that we are living in, and its laws are God's laws. Try fitting any of these crude, grotesque notions we have been naming into one of the familiar descriptions from the Bible: "*God, that made the world and all things that are therein, seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with*

hands, neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, seeing He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things," and sendeth trouble to them that will hang feathers on their walls, but stayeth His hand for them that tap on wood. — Does it sound blasphemous? Of course it does! It *is* blasphemous. A pagan might speak so of his god. A Christian's thoughts should be moving on a higher level.

X

IMPOSING ON OTHERS

X

IMPOSING ON OTHERS

I DO wish girls would be more careful about imposing on others.

I speak with feeling, because Priscilla is so often imposed on. I can't blame *her*. Indeed, I seldom blame the person who is imposed on. About small matters, it is usually better not to make a fuss. "Standing up for one's rights" is greatly overdone, I think. But when Priscilla came home from school, yesterday, with the left sleeve of her new coat simply soaked with rain, because she had had to share her umbrella with Gladys, I was thoroughly vexed — with Gladys. The coat will have to be pressed, and I doubt if it will ever look as well again. Gladys

never bothers with an umbrella unless it is actually raining when she starts. "Oh, I can go under with someone else," she says, and sets gaily forth. "Does your mother *make* you carry an umbrella?" she said to Priscilla, calmly superior, the very morning of the shower.

Of course none of us object to sharing in emergencies. But this deliberate planning to make your friends do the daily carrying back and forth for you is just plain selfishness. And it is simple mathematics that one umbrella will not cover two people. Notice, sometime when you are walking behind, and compare the distance across two pairs of shoulders, *plus* the necessary distance between, with the diameter of the umbrella.

But we have had girls come for regular visits without umbrellas or raincoats. Mabel Newcomb did that, explaining cheerfully that she knew Priscilla wouldn't mind lending. Poor Pris had just bought a

new raincoat, and was extremely proud of it, and she looked dejected enough walking out in the old one, which the Salvation Army wagon had forgotten to take away, beside Mabel in the first glory of the new. Of course Mabel suggested wearing the old one herself, but she didn't urge it. I don't really suppose Pris could have let her, if she had.

Borrowing, even if it begins in frank good nature on both sides, is likely to be carried too far. You never can tell what things may happen to be specially precious, and though your friend is perfectly willing to lend you her Egyptian scarf, and even offers her party bag, she may hate to see you go off with her cheap little fan, because she has reasons of her own for prizing it. I have lost many things of value in my twenty-five years' housekeeping — broken cut-glass and silver gone to the garbage-bucket — but I never mourned for any of them as I did for a little fifty-cent handkerchief which

was part of my trousseau, and which a careless niece helped herself to and never brought back.

At college, Dorothy actually lost a hat, not a "knock-about," but a real "dress hat." It didn't turn up with her other winter things when she came home for the long vacation, and she dimly remembered that someone had borrowed it. That was all — we never saw it again. How a girl *could* pack up and carry home, by accident, a hat trimmed with vivid poppy-red velvet and plumes, none of the grown people in the family could understand, but Dorothy always stoutly maintained that in the give-and-take of college life it was not at all strange.

Priscilla gets regularly "done" out of all her small possessions at school, Rob says. It certainly does seem as if the child could never call a pencil her own for more than a day. Her father brings home an extra quality from the office for her, knowing how much she likes the

kind he uses, and she sets out, Mondays, with the finest of fine points on three or four. But, apparently, the girls for several seats round depend on her store. She admits she is the only one that keeps a penknife on her desk, and I think it must be the same with rulers and rubbers, and I know her compasses are constantly in demand, for I hear her complain that she couldn't do her geometry in school because someone else had them.

But what annoys me the most is her being asked to pass round her Latin translation, or her problems. Pris studies hard, and often stays indoors when the others are out, and then, next day, the very girls who laugh at her for being a "grind" will calmly borrow what she ground out while they were cheering the basketball team. It doesn't seem fair.

Mrs. Kendall was very much disturbed the other day, because a friend of Gladys' wrote to invite herself to stay with them over the

Fourth. Some young man had asked her for the boating carnival, and she couldn't come down from her own home and get back on the same day, but if she could spend the night before and the night after with the Kendalls it would work out all right. Mrs. Kendall was going to have a houseful of relatives just then, anyway, and didn't see how she could squeeze in another person; and she didn't know the man at all, and didn't fancy what she heard of him, and would have been as well pleased not to have Gladys make his acquaintance. But she couldn't very well refuse.

It ought to be a rule, with all nice girls, never to *ask* for anything which couldn't very well be refused. It is very commonly done, and nice girls do it. But they ought not.

"Do you mind telling me?" says the nice girl, and asks an inquisitive question, and learns something her friend would have preferred to keep from her.

"Do you mind if I go too?" she says, and makes a third in a walk that had been planned for two.

"Do you mind introducing me?" she begs, and the prejudice which her friend happened to know the new girl had against her is doubled. Most of the questions that must begin with "Do you mind?" would be better omitted.

Some girls accept kindnesses, without making any effort to refuse or return them, as if they conferred a favor by allowing others to wait on them, as a princess might. Our dear Mary Day has that habit. I suspect it is a habit to which sweet, tactful girls are rather liable.

Mary has such a pretty way of thanking you, if you offer to mend her glove or press out her lingerie waist or carry her letter to the box or do up her laundry bundle or pack her suit-case, that for the first half dozen times you almost feel that for you to toil and for her to smile is just the proper division of labor.

But if you spend two weeks with her, as Dorothy has just done, it begins to pall. A number of the girls had taken a cottage on a campground, and the work was divided up among them. But Mary was always dropping out of the schedule — her head ached, or the long walk in the heat had made her feel faint, or something. At first the girls were very sympathetic, and settled her in the hammock with the complete quota of pillows — Dorothy said Mary never put up that hammock once herself, in the whole fortnight — and hung over her with violet water and lavender salts. But towards the last they began to feel as if she really might have taken her share with the rest.

Some girls expect altogether too much money to be spent on them — like princesses again, looking for their tribute. If they are visiting, they not only accept the car-fares for the trips which their friends propose, — which is all right, of course, — but

they have little excursions of their own to suggest, and leave those to be paid for in the same way. And often a guest's preference may increase or diminish quite perceptibly the cost of an excursion that is planned. Some girls are always pleased with the idea of carrying a luncheon from home, for example; others always incline to a restaurant if there is a chance.

And at a restaurant, some girls make a moderate meal, as they would at home, and others seem bent on eating straight through the menu. When it is the father of the family who is taking his daughter's friend about, it doesn't matter so much, perhaps, though even fathers have times when dimes as well as dollars count. But when it is a brother who is trying to play the courteous host for his sister's sake, it makes a good deal of difference.

The father of a bright young fellow who is paying part of his way through college, tells me that his

boy has about given up inviting girls to receptions, and even to games, because it costs so much. They expect so many extras, he says — flowers, and often a carriage, and a man doesn't like to seem mean, and he'd rather keep out of the whole thing. So some girls, I suspect, are losing some very good times. History repeats itself, doesn't it, if we may compare small things with great? Grasping princesses, — intolerable exactions — revolution!

XI

LETTER-WRITING

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LETTER-WRITING

I HOPE you will not answer this very soon, for I shall not want to write another letter right off."

So ended a prim little note sent to me when I was a child by a cousin a year or two younger. Minnie was spending a winter with our grandmother, and was being taught to perform her duties promptly. I understood exactly how she felt, and should not have seen anything droll in her candor if my father and mother had not laughed when the letter was shown to them. But I have often thought of it since.

"Duty-letters" — how the girls do hate to write them! Not only small girls like Minnie, for whom it is a

perilous feat to guide a pen full of ink across the slippery page, but my own Priscilla, and most of her friends. Priscilla is particularly puzzling, for she enjoys writing and is capable of a really delightful letter if the mood seizes her. But the consciousness that she "ought" to write seems to benumb all her faculties. It is partly, I suspect, because she has the habit of procrastinating, and then must begin with apologies — an apology never makes a first-rate spring-board to start from. "Prod Priscilla promptly and p'remptorily," Rob says, is Mother's motto.

A "duty-letter," like a "duty-call," is harder the longer you put it off. On the other hand, if you attend to it at the proper time, it is easier in at least two ways — you are in a better mood for writing, and a shorter letter will do. Promptness will save you as much as two or three sentences, I should say, if you *will* be so stingy with your words!

Of all the letters that girls hate to

write — and grown people, too — I suppose letters of sympathy come hardest. And yet I am sure there are none that do more good. If we could only get rid of the feeling that they ought to be written in some very special style, — like a sermon, perhaps — and could just tell our friend in the simplest possible way how sorry we are that trouble has come to her, we should not shrink from the effort as we do. It is that miserable shyness that comes from thinking of ourselves, and of the appearance we are making, that embarrasses us here as at so many other times.

"I don't know what to say" — that is the common complaint as we sit, paper before us, trying to begin. But the very fact that we cared enough to write will be a comfort, in itself. Again and again those who have had heavy sorrow testify that it is. Years after, they recall such letters and speak of them. If one wrote no more than the simple

sentence — "I do not know how to tell you how sorry I am" — it would be worth while. But if there is more that it seems natural to say, do not withhold it for fear it may not be suitable.

Frances Goodwin told us that when her sister Lucy died the greatest comforts they had were the letters from her college friends. And one of them, Frances said, wrote how much Lucy used to talk about her home, and how she was always looking forward to going home in vacations, and always spoke as if everything was so ideal there. Frances said she and her father could never be grateful enough to the girl who wrote that — it did her mother more good than anything else — she kept reading it over and over.

About all kinds of letters, that is the first rule, I believe — try to think what you would like to hear, if you were in your friend's place. If you were sick, you would want to

know what all the girls were doing. And you would specially like to hear how much they missed you, and what sympathetic things had been said. Details are best. "We all miss you" is pleasant, but "Molly said the picnic wouldn't be any fun without you" is much pleasanter. And if it happened that anything appreciative, any word of praise had been said, wouldn't that be the very best part of the letter, if your friend remembered to put it in? "*Pass along praise*" — I should like to start a society with that motto. A real toothsome compliment, any nurse can tell you, will often do a patient more good than her dinner.

Letters of congratulation ought to be fun to write, and I wonder we don't all write them oftener. *They* give us a chance to strike out in our own line, and do something that wasn't expected of us, which is always exciting. Priscilla was perfectly amazed to find how pleased Mildred Gates was with the note she wrote

her, after the Glee Club concert, telling her how much she enjoyed her solo. But little things like that do give a "finishing touch" to one's satisfaction.

"Un-birthday presents" — presents between times, when one is not looking for them — seem to be a new fad, and a very pleasant one. Letters like Priscilla's to Mildred are in that line. A letter to a teacher, thanking her for her interest and help, would be very cheering; I don't believe half the gratitude the boys and girls really feel ever gets itself expressed. Of course these "un-birthday" letters can always be both hearty and sincere, for nobody need send them unless she wants to. But if one will be on the lookout for chances, one will find a great many.

I had a letter, this spring, that really delighted me. It was from a young girl to whom I had sent a present two or three years ago, and she had written at the time to thank me. But she enjoyed it even more

than she expected, and she wrote again, and thanked me a second time, all out of a clear sky.

But none of us would want to give up our regular birthday presents on the chance of getting "un-birthday" ones. And I think we'd all better keep up with our regular letters first — our old duty-letters — and then branch off into these spontaneous ones afterward, if we have more time.

Letters of thanks ought not to be hard to write. But some girls grumble over them so, one feels as if they didn't deserve any invitations, or gifts, or kindnesses of any sort. Their letters, when they get them done, are so short and stiff — they might have been turned out by the dozen, all just alike.

I sent the same present, last Christmas, to two of my nieces. One wrote:

DEAR AUNTY: — Do forgive me for not thanking you before for that charming book. It was so kind of you to remember

me. We have had a lot of people here, and a lot doing. I have quantities of notes to write, and must make them all short. Love to all.

Devotedly,
WINIFRED.

The other wrote:

AUNTY DEAR: — How *did* you know a volume of Kipling would be the very nicest thing you could possibly send me for Christmas? Was it because you remembered how much I enjoyed hearing Uncle Robert read him aloud, last summer? But *any*body would enjoy hearing Uncle Robert read *any*thing, you know, so *that* wasn't proof! But you guessed right, however you did it, even to the color of the binding. I have been *wanting* more red in my bookcase. And red is the color for Kipling, anyway, isn't it? I shall bring it, next time I come, and then Pris and I can read together, turn and turn about, as we did with "The Vision of Sir Launfal." Give her a lot of love from me, and the same to Rob — *if* I may take the liberty! — and *always* a lot, you *know*, to yourself and Uncle-dear, and *many* thanks, from

KITTY.

Kitty's English teacher would blue-pencil her italics, I suppose,

but I don't mind a little over-emphasis, when it's in the way of affection. Kitty means all she says. And her letter, you see, has the real personal sound. It couldn't have been written about any other present — fancy Win's calling "The Seven Seas," charming! — or to any other person. And it showed she had been thinking about me, and my home, putting herself in my place, as we said before. It is those personal touches that make a letter really grateful to the heart. Without them, no matter how painstaking and clever and full of news and comment it may be, it turns into an essay or a chronicle, and misses all the cheering, gladdening possibilities of the true letter.

XII

THE ART OF LIKING PEOPLE

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THE ART OF LIKING PEOPLE

IT certainly is an art, and it certainly can be cultivated. Of course some fortunate people have a natural gift for it, as they might have for music or painting. But most of us need to take pains, and practise.

My niece Alice can never realize that. Alice is a bright girl, fairly pretty, with good manners. Her father and mother are cordial, hospitable people. There is nothing in her circumstances to prevent her making friends. But she has so few that she is really unhappy about it. Of course, she knows plenty of girls, and walks back and forth to school with them, and isn't left out of the parties and picnics that they

plan. But she says she doesn't feel as if any of them really cared about her. And, to tell the candid truth, I don't think they do.

There isn't any reason why they should, you see. Alice doesn't care about any of them. She thinks she wants friends, and she feels lonely without friends, but when you come to talk to her of this girl and the other, she doesn't want *them* for friends — she doesn't find them "congenial."

My father taught us to hate that word "congenial." I hate it still. It may have been a good word once, but it got into bad company long, long ago. I never hear Alice use it without thinking how supercilious it sounds. She doesn't *say* that it is because she is so superior that she finds the rest so "uncongenial," but that is what she *means*. And really, in spite of the loneliness which she regrets, one can detect a certain pride in it — the pride of a Solitary Soul.

Now to be a Solitary Soul is not so fine as Alice thinks. It is fine, of course, to be the first at the top of the climb, even if you must wait by yourself till the others come up. But to be alone at the bottom, because all the others have started on — there's nothing fine about that. No "solitary grandeur" there, just plain, literal "getting left."

Alice hasn't the slightest idea that she is at the bottom, or anywhere near it. In her very humblest moods, I think she feels at least three-quarters up. She is a fastidious girl, and avoids many of the common, obvious faults without effort. But one of the most serious faults of all she has — she always sees the worst in people. So she is always failing to get into sympathy with them, and losing chances to work with them and get and give the mutual help that comes from common effort. She will grow to be a very narrow person, I am afraid, in spite of her advantages.

"But one can't like *everybody*," Alice always protests. No, not everybody. But the more the better. Liking, not disliking, is the ideal. We want to reach out, not draw in. I had a teacher once who could enjoy only four of our English poets — Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton and Wordsworth, I believe they were. He was a brilliant man, and could give admirable reasons for finding all the others wanting, but I shall always think he might have had more pleasure himself, and done us just as much good, if he could have extended his range a little.

We should pity the person who could not enjoy any flowers but orchids. Even if she added lilies and roses to her list, we should still be sorry she was losing all the pleasure the rest of us take in pansies and lilacs and daffodils and nasturtiums and golden-rod and buttercups. The girl who can like only two or three kinds of people is far more to be

pitied. She is losing, not only pleasure, but the chance for service. Even flowers are said to grow better for those who love them. People certainly do.

I once met a charming woman who had been a missionary in India for years — missionaries are almost always charming people, if you notice — and I asked her a question that had often been in my mind. Did she find it possible really to love those strange women, with habits and ways of thinking so totally different from her own, or did she work from a sense of duty? She startled me by the promptness of her answer: "How could I help them if I *didn't* love them?"

She stated her belief a little too strongly, I think. We can *begin* to help people even if we do not love them, and by helping we may learn loving. But if the power to love doesn't come, the power to help will not last long. "The gift without the giver is bare."

Critical people seem to carry an oppressive, discouraging atmosphere with them — a real dog-day air. I have an old school friend who visits me sometimes. She is sincerely fond of me, I am sure, and she means to think as well as possible of my household. But she has had the habit, all her life, of noticing little things that went wrong, and it seems as if everything went wrong, out of sheer perversity, every time she came. Her presence makes a constraint that even I feel. Our meals are ordeals. Rob is sure to drop something, and Priscilla — usually a model of tact — makes some dreadful "break" when she is trying to help along the dragging conversation. As for me, I see every spot on the tablecloth double, with my own eyes and with Caroline's. Caroline goes, and we are all light-hearted and merry again, and the cloth looks fairly clean.

Then I have another friend — one of the most gifted women I have

ever known, a woman who has travelled, and seen the very best of life, and won reputation, and earned the right, if any one could, to be fastidious and fussy. *She* comes, and the maid waits on the table with unusual deftness, and Rob and Pris surprise even their doting mother by their charming manners and amusing chat, and the whole cocoa-pot may upset itself if it pleases and no one gives it a second thought. It is the difference between a bright, clear, bracing day and a sultry one. And the difference in the two women is just in their power of sympathy and adaptation. Evelyn always looks for the best in everyone — it is second nature to her, by this time — and she always finds it.

Evelyn was one of the most popular girls that ever graduated from our college, and I am not claiming that we could all be like her. A fine mind reenforces the impulses of her warm heart, and the result is tact

of a quality that one seldom finds. But I know the source from which her generous sympathy springs, and *that* we may all share. It is the faith that we are all alike children of God, on equal footing before Him, all brothers and sisters in the care of a loving, impartial Father.

Now we all believe that. But how many of us behave as if we did? How many of us actually realize what it means? You are clever and ambitious, and to your friends, as well as to yourself, you seem a very important young person. But that cheap girl who was flunked on her finals, last June, is as important, to God, as you.

You are proud of your capable father and mother, and of the farm which has been in your family from pioneering days. But that little Armenian girl who brings laces to the door, that Chinese boy who comes with the laundry bundle — they are as important, to God, as you.

That old friend who has become estranged from you, who did you that injury that you cannot forget — she is just as important to God as you, and if His providence ever intervenes to set matters right between you, it will be just as much for her sake as for yours.

Does that seem hard to realize? Then there is all the more need to make the effort. Try using the formula for awhile. When anyone seems to you contemptible or insignificant or uninteresting, when you have a grudge against anyone, try saying over to yourself: "*She is as important, to God, as I.*"

XIII

CHURCH MANNERS

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CHURCH MANNERS

BROTHERS, you may have noticed, are pretty severe critics of their sisters, and our Rob is not pleased with Priscilla's manners at church. Priscilla is a demure little mouse, and not even a carping brother could complain of the way in which she walks up the aisle and takes her seat. What Rob would do I shudder to imagine, if he had a sister who came striding in at her fastest week-day gait, swinging her arms, like Gladys Kendall, or spent the first ten minutes patting her hair and settling her hat and smoothing her gloves as Mabel Newcomb used to.

But Priscilla, it must be confessed,

whispers. She whispers in the softest of little voices, and she feels as if no one could possibly be disturbed, and it is a great temptation, for she is always seeing people that she knows and I don't, and wanting to point them out to me. And of course she never whispers during the prayers, and seldom during the sermon, and not very often during the singing — mostly before the service is fairly begun. But Rob is firm in his condemnation. No whispering at all, from the very beginning to the very end, is the rule he lays down. Otherwise, he thinks a girl might be thought "cheap," perhaps even "tough."

Priscilla waxes indignant at his setting up for a censor. "Why, Mother," she says, "it doesn't seem any time since I used to have to draw pictures all through the sermon, to keep that wriggling youngster still!" But she has to admit the force of his criticisms. Gradually she is improving.

Different churches have different standards of decorum. In some it is not thought suitable to notice one's friends, by bows or even smiles, after one enters. Even friendly greetings at the end of service are postponed till the outside of the church is reached. Decorum of that sort accords with the idea of the church as a place for worship only — the "cathedral idea," as it is sometimes called. On the other hand, with the idea that the church is a place where we meet to strengthen our sense not only of the Fatherhood of God, but of the Brotherhood of Man, belongs the freer, easier style of manners.

There is a great deal to be said for both views, and it is all very interesting, and leads one back into hundreds of years of history, and sometime I hope Priscilla and Rob will study into it for themselves, for it is going to be a new question as well as an old one. Meanwhile, if they follow the standard of the

church they happen to be in, no one will find any fault with them.

Away from home, when one does not know what the habits of the place are, the strict rules are always the safe ones to follow. Carelessness at church gives more offence than carelessness anywhere else. But as to whispering, there is no difference of opinion. Pris will have to leave *that* off, wherever she is.

It isn't only that it seems disorderly, and disrespectful, and ill-bred, and irreverent. It does disturb others, even when the whisper is as gentle as Priscilla's. There are more deaf people than one might think in every audience, or people partly deaf. None of us had ever noticed that old Mr. Gates was losing his hearing, but Mrs. Gates tells me they changed their seat because they were in a whispering neighborhood, and he kept missing words now and then, in spite of all his pains.

Whisperers are seen as well as

heard, and they distract attention quite as much that way. The Johnsons exchange a good many comments back and forth, two rows in front of us, and I often catch Priscilla's glance following theirs and know perfectly well that she is trying to puzzle out what interests them. Even Rob, the righteous, sometimes forgets himself, and enquires at dinner whether anybody knows what there was up in the gallery, at the left-hand end, that set those fresh Johnson girls going so.

Now preaching against such distractions is hard work, and any preacher will tell you so, if he is not too courteous to be perfectly frank. It may be you are one of the very persons that your pastor had in mind when he planned his sermon, and there may be one special truth in it that he hoped would help and encourage *you*. He has thought about it all the week, and tried to put it in the clearest possible form, and illustrated it in a way that he

hoped might catch your attention, and has prayed that he might speak in the right spirit — and when he gets to that passage you are not thinking about the sermon at all, but are studying the way the insertion is set into the dress in front of you.

Don't imagine he doesn't notice. He does. Probably he reflects that one must make allowance for young people, and does not let himself be too much disheartened. But it has been a disheartening little incident. And you have been, for that service, not a help to your pastor, but a hindrance.

You might have been a great help. If you had followed the sermon with an alert, intelligent attention the preacher would have felt a difference. If you had joined promptly and heartily in the responsive reading and the singing, the people sitting near you would have felt a difference, and some of them would have been impelled to join with more heart.

If you would come to church, Sunday by Sunday, with the same eager purpose to cheer and encourage and help along that you take to see your basket-ball team play a match game, you alone could accomplish more than you dream of. *Try it.*

There is some one at the other end of the church who needs more help and less hindrance — the sexton. I think he has a pretty stiff job. The older people want him to keep things scrupulously heat and treat the carpets and upholstery as tenderly as possible, and turn out the gas promptly, and do everything he can to save expense. But the young people don't feel much anxiety about the church finances, and to them the sexton's little precautions seem fussy, and they set him down as disobliging.

The new rug in our Ladies' Parlor has been the cause of endless disputes between our sexton and Young People's Society. It is a nice rug, and the ladies worked hard to get

it, and one of the rules is that refreshments shall *not* be served with it down. Socials must be held in the Bible-Class Room, or the rug must be taken up. That seems simple enough, and none of us can see why it should irritate the Society so, especially as most of the members are our own boys and girls, and have heard the whole situation explained over and over again.

But the sexton complains that refreshments are constantly edged in, "informally," at the end of meetings which had been allowed in the parlor on the understanding that they were "just missionary meetings," and that he finds crumbs on the rug, and grease-spots. Or, if it is agreed that there are to be refreshments, no one remembers to have some of the boys come to roll up the rug, and the girls find it too heavy for them to manage and send over to his house for him, and sometimes grumble, audibly, at him for not having got it up himself beforehand.

It was after one of those meetings, I suppose, that Sally Curtis came home in a rage and told her mother that "old Jordan" was "a perfect crank." No, I believe the special grievance that night was that he asked them if they were ready to go home, and turned out the lights before they were fairly out of the door — there are so many of these little episodes, one gets them confused!

There is a whole line of debatable things — all of them small, but making a total that ought not to be added to a busy man's work unless something is added to his pay. The Flower-Committee, for instance, counts its duties ended when the flowers are put in place, and goes away serenely unconscious of the stems and leaves left on the table in the tidy kitchen. The Music-Committee enlists four sturdy youths to roll the big piano in from the Sunday-school room for the Endeavor meeting, but forgets to have them

roll it back, and Mr. Jordan, who *is* an elderly man, must cope with the situation as best he can.

"Charity begins at home." Fair Play for the sexton!

XIV

FRIENDSHIP

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FRIENDSHIP

A CALLER came the other day — a woman whose charm I always feel, and yet who always leaves me unsatisfied. She lacks a certain trait — or at least I am afraid she does, which comes to about the same thing, in this case.

Sitting on the piazza, that evening, talking over the day, I said to my husband, "What trait of character do you value most? What seems to you of the very first importance, something absolutely indispensable, something that you *must have* in a friend?"

He answered promptly, as I might have known he would, "Unselfishness."

Rob said "Generosity," which was about the same thing, of course.

Priscilla voted for Tact and Sympathy, dear child.

We put the question to the Dressmaker, as she came downstairs with her bulging bag. Her choice was a double one, too — "Generosity and Refinement," an odd combination.

Mrs. Kendall came over with a dish of late raspberries from her garden. We all fell to on them at once, and gave her our conundrum in exchange. Her answer was "Kindness."

None of them had guessed mine.

"Don't any of you care about Sincerity?" I said.

They all exclaimed! They had all taken *that* for granted, as something fundamental, something that didn't even need mentioning, as much a matter of course as keeping your hands clean! (Rob scowled at the illustration.)

To character and to friendship, we all agreed, sincerity is the first

essential. We all know flourishing friendships that have died down for want of it.

About Mary Day, fond as we all are of her, there is always that little uncomfortable feeling that you can't be quite sure she means what she says, or cares as much for you as she would have you believe. One doesn't expect to be first with all one's friends, but whatever place one does hold, one likes to feel secure in. A twenty-five cent handkerchief for my birthday may please me as much as a fifty-cent one, but I don't like to find a fifty-cent label pinned to it, nor to suspect that it has been sent to me in a box from a better store than the one where it was actually bought. False pretenses, of all sorts, no matter how trifling, make one doubt the whole character.

There is a homely old proverb which says: "A dog that will fetch a bone will carry one." I wonder how old it is — it must date back to a time when people were more careful

of the distinctions between "fetch," "carry," "bring" and "take" than they are now. But it points an up-to-date moral. When Mary, in her sweet, soft voice, confides to our Dorothy that she would *rather* go home with her from the house-party than with anyone else, but she feels she *ought* to go with Sylvia because Sylvia is so easily hurt and Dorothy is always so sensible and will understand — how can Dorothy help realizing that Sylvia would be bitterly hurt if she knew her promised guest was talking of her so, and how can she help suspecting that, to Sylvia, Mary might say something equally unpleasant for her to hear?

"Never say behind the back what you would not say to the face" is a good rule to follow, for friends. It would be a good rule for everybody to follow, but that is almost too much to expect, and it is a silly person who takes offense because she happens to hear of a criticism on her dress or manners that some ordinary ac-

quaintance has made. We are saying such things constantly, most of us, and no one is much to blame except the people who report the light, casual talk to those who were never meant to hear it — *they* must be extraordinarily careless or spiteful, I admit.

But with our friends the case is altogether different. We expect our friends to feel toward us as our families do. They can't think we're perfect, of course. Sometimes it may even be their duty to tell us they don't. But before outsiders, we expect them to behave as if they did — to present a solid front, as loyal comrades should.

It takes tact as well as courage to do this, sometimes. But it can be done. I heard Priscilla, in the hammock yesterday, say to Mildred Gates, "Don't you think that new hat of Sally Curtis's is awfully loud?" Mildred answered, with a deprecating little laugh, "Well, you know, I'm getting awfully fond of

Sally." That met the situation perfectly. Priscilla understood at once, and promptly changed the subject.

Tact is useful to friendship in all sorts of ways. The "kindness" that Mrs. Kendall prizes so — poor lady, she gets little enough of it from her heedless, headstrong Gladys — needs tact to make it acceptable. Many kind-hearted, obtuse people go blundering through life without the friendship they crave, for want of this very tact. "Sympathy" is closely related to it, and so is the "refinement" that the Dressmaker sets such store by.

The Dressmaker is a practical woman, who has taken care of herself since she was sixteen and met a good many hard knocks, and I was surprised at her valuing so highly a quality which many people think ornamental rather than useful. But she is quite in accord with that other student of human nature, George Eliot, who gives it as her opinion that "a difference of taste in jokes

is one of the severest tests of friendship." Certainly we can judge of people's quality by the jokes they enjoy, and often do judge of it so, glancing at the pictures we see them chuckling over on the trains. So one can judge of quality by a laugh.

Some subjects ought to be ruled out from jesting. Religion is one. I think love is another. All the little sly hints about "best girls" and "steadies" that many persons are so fond of making, are in poor taste, and a girl who disliked them could not long make a close friend of one who found them amusing.

The Dressmaker says, too, that refinement is even more necessary to friendship when you work hard and have to scrimp than it might be if you were rich. In large houses, with ample space, people don't rub up against each other so closely. But in a crowded boarding-house, where perhaps you don't even have your room to yourself, if people are prying and indecorous, you feel it.

More friendships, she thinks, have perished because people couldn't keep out of each other's way and couldn't let each other's affairs alone than from all other causes put together. I shouldn't wonder if she was right.

Girls, I know, sometimes come back from visits feeling that they have seen too much of each other, and learned too much of each other's concerns. Reserve and reticence are really essential to the finest friendship. In the first enthusiasm over a new friend, with the delight of finding one's self understood and sympathized with, girls often pour forth confidences that they regret afterwards. But if the listening friend has proper delicacy, she does not refer to the subject again, and the mortification gradually wears off, and the friendship is saved in spite of the indiscretion which had imperiled it. But if, on the other hand, your friend wakes in the morning to put one question more to you on the topic which you went to sleep

feeling you had talked about too much, you will probably detach yourself from her as fast as you can, and the whole episode will always be a disagreeable one to look back on. Robert Burns gives shrewd advice:

"Aye free, aff han' your story tell,
When wi' a bosom crony;
But still keep something to yoursel
Ye scarcely tell to ony."

XV

THE GENEROUS HEART

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THE GENEROUS HEART

ROB would have most of the boys with him — and the girls too, I suspect, — in voting for generosity as a prime requisite in a friend. I should agree with them, if they would let me make the definition. To me, "generosity" means something more than Rob means when he says he has "no use for a tight wad."

Most boys and girls part with money pretty easily, not having learned yet how hard it is to get it, and it's no special credit to them to be generous in that way. Indeed, I have known "tight wads" who were the greatest possible comfort to hard-working fathers and mothers, and

who had more of the qualities that make firm, trusty friends than those who laughed at them.

Priscilla, from her three years' superior knowledge of the world, understands me better than Rob when I say that to be generous-*hearted* is the great thing. Your real friend must be generous with her interest and appreciation, must be willing to throw herself into your concerns and to try to take your point of view. You remember that old definition of a bore — "A person who wants to talk about *himself* when you want to talk about *yourself*." We are all bores sometimes, and we need friends who can be patient with bores.

It was because Mildred Gates had this generous-hearted patience that she got at the real Sally Curtis so much sooner than any of the other girls did. Sally is a lively, loquacious creature, inclined to talk a great deal about the fun they had in the place where she used to live,

and most of the girls set her down, at once, as conceited, and took no pains to find out what else she might be. But Mildred is always a sympathetic listener, and it was no great hardship to her to let Sally chatter on, when they happened to walk to school together, and gradually she discovered that Sally was really much nicer than she seemed at first, an obliging, energetic girl, willing to put herself to endless trouble for her friends, and really to be just as enthusiastic about the new ones as the old, if only they would give her a chance. So, now, Mildred is slowly interpreting Sally to the rest, and before long she will be fairly popular. Nothing that Mildred could possibly have bought, with money, for Sally, would have been worth as much to her.

Envy poisons too many friendships. Two girls seem the closest of friends as long as their circumstances are fairly equal, but one grows more prosperous and can dress

better and spend more freely in all sorts of little ways, and there begins to be coolness between them. Outsiders are apt to blame the richer girl. "She has grown snobbish," they say. No doubt that is true sometimes. But sometimes it is true that the poorer girl is envious and sensitive and suspicious, on the lookout for slights where none are meant, and almost impossible to get on with.

My niece Kitty says that every summer, when they come back to the little village where they lived all the year round before her father went into business for himself, she has to go much more than half way — "Oh, three-quarters, at least, Aunty!" — with the other girls. They all seem to be expecting her to hold aloof, and are all on their guard to prevent her snubbing them, though she hasn't the slightest idea of it. It takes a month, every time, she says, to make them believe that she really is just the same girl, ex-

cept, of course, the two or three with whom she has been keeping up a correspondence.

But we know that friends do grow apart. We must accept that as one of the facts of life. It is not always a sad one. It does not always mean that there is blame on either side. All friendships are not made of the same stuff, and some have better wearing qualities than others.

Two girls are constantly together, and count themselves intimate friends, because they are both devoted to tennis. As they grow older, they develop quite different tastes, and prove to have less in common than they had supposed. They were not really friends — we overwork that word — they were just playmates, and neither of them need feel unhappy because the other has found a new playmate.

Real friendship is based on qualities of character. You value truth and courage above everything else, and you believe your friend is the

truest, bravest girl you know, or, at the very least, you believe she agrees with you in making truth and courage the ideals to strive for. To be disappointed in a friendship like that is a real blow — there's no denying it. But a friendship like that, if you are *not* disappointed in it, is one of the most precious gifts life can hold for you. It is worth making a great effort to keep.

The generous spirit helps to keep friends as well as make them. A jealous, exacting temper is almost fatal to friendship. Priscilla was telling, the other day, a tale that sounded incredibly quaint and old-fashioned to me — I could have imagined such girls in the days of samplers and small waists, but I had no idea they had lingered on into the twentieth century — Priscilla was telling of a girl in her class who actually did not wish to have more than one friend, and of course could not allow her friend to have more than one. As you would expect,

her friendships never lasted long — the situation was too tense.

Few girls would go to such an extreme as that. But I suspect there are a good many girls who look on doubtfully when they see their friends beginning to make new friendships. The feeling is natural, I admit. And yet, we surely do not want to confess ourselves so narrow that we have room in our hearts for only one friendship. We need many, for our best development, and we shall not be as useful as we were meant to be, nor as happy, unless we have them. We cannot be so mean as to begrudge them to others.

At our society breakfast, last Commencement, several of us fell to talking about Evelyn Cunningham. We always talk about Evelyn, when she is not there — it is next best to hearing her talk. We talked about her new book, and told each other the nice things the reviewers had said, and felt prouder of her than ever, if that were possible. Then

we talked about the hosts of friends she had in college days, and how she held them still — not one hurt or neglected, so far as any of us knew. Everywhere she goes, she makes new friends, but they never crowd out the old. More than one of us would name Evelyn first among our college friends, but not one of us would claim to be first with her.

"Isn't it odd," said one of the girls, "that Evelyn has always been able to have so many friends without their ever being jealous of each other?"

At first we agreed that it was odd, and then we laughed together at the oddness of the thought. We are all at our best with Evelyn, and pettiness and jealousy, if they ever trouble us, do not obtrude themselves in our relations with *her*. I think we all feel that friendship like hers — wise, sincere, stanch and unselfish as human friendship can be — is too large a thing for jealousy.

There it is, you see. To enjoy the

large things of life in the largest way, we must be large-hearted ourselves. We sometimes think we don't get our deserts in this imperfect world. But in this matter of friendship, I incline to think we do — real, lasting friendship, I mean, not mere popularity. You long for the ideal friend? Deserve her, and I think you will find her.

In that rare poem called "Waiting," John Burroughs has expressed this conviction.

"I stay my haste, I make delays,
For what avails this eager pace?
I stand amid the eternal ways,
And what is mine shall know my face.
Asleep, awake, by night or day,
The friends I seek are seeking me,
No wind can drive my bark astray
Nor change the tide of destiny."

XVI

ALL IN THE DAY'S WORK

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ALL IN THE DAY'S WORK

THE enameled hat-pin that Sister Adelaide brought me from Paris has always been too long, and I have never dared to wear it. Priscilla came home once with an ugly scratch on her cheek, given her by a projecting pin as its owner crowded by her onto a street-car, and that seemed to make the danger quite real to all of us. Hats didn't seem to be growing any larger, and I finally took the pin to be shortened.

Yesterday I called for it. "How much will it be?" I said.

"Five cents," said the Cheerful Jeweler.

"Five cents!" I exclaimed. "I should think you'd had more than

five cents' worth of trouble with me calling twice."

The Cheerful Jeweler laughed. "Well," he said, "if we charged what it's really worth to file them down, people would begin to say, 'Why, I only *gave* a quarter for that hat-pin.' We have to do some jobs that don't pay us. It's all in the day's work."

All in the day's work! There is a whole system of practical philosophy in the Cheerful Jeweler's phrase. It recalls the old proverbs, "No rose without a thorn," and "You must take the bitter with the sweet." It counsels us to accept life as it is, adjust ourselves to it, make the best of it, and do our part in it generously and bravely and happily.

Annoyances will always be in the day's work. They come to those who carry great responsibilities as well as to us lesser folk. I remember distinctly the surprise we felt when we began to get Cousin Gertrude's letters from Turkey. We had

thought it a great sacrifice for her to decline the position that was offered her here, and go out there and leave all of us, but I think we had felt as if, in compensation, her life would be lived on a loftier plane, free from the petty annoyances the rest of us had to contend with.

Behold, the very first thing, Gertrude's baggage was delayed, and when she met all the new people in Constantinople, she had to do it in borrowed clothes! Gertrude is an out-size, and never could wear anything that belonged to anyone else — I can imagine how she must have looked.

And the discomforts of the trip up the Black Sea! And across the mountains! Not picturesque perils, from brigands only — if you call those picturesque — but fleas, and prying people, and no place to undress.

And when she finally got to her station, it wasn't just an earthquake, and done with it, but every kind of

nagging, worrying little bother that the head of an American boarding-school ever had — doors that wouldn't lock, and bad butter from the best grocer, and lazy servants, and girls that woke you up in the night because they "heard something," and visitors that turned up when you hadn't a spare bed to put them in.

It was *just* as bad as home, with all the hardships of a foreign land and language thrown in. Gertrude wrote in her light, whimsical way about them all, and her letters taught a lesson in the family circle before they began to be borrowed for missionary meetings.

Interruptions will always be in the day's work. Priscilla says it seems as if she never settled down to get a lot done on her couch cushion that Rob didn't turn up, wanting to know whether she'd seen his tennis-ball or his running-shirt or his bird-book. Of course "Have you seen?" is just a wheedling way

of saying "Come help me look," and Priscilla sighs but comes.

After all, it is these small kindnesses that make the pleasant memories. Priscilla's grandfather tells her that, in his boyhood, there was one of his sisters who had a special knack for finding things. (A very useful knack it must have been — prized by the parents, I should think, as much as by the other children. In our family, it never seems as if the children really expected to find things. They go, and look, and report their looking with a sense of duty done, and then some older person gets up, and does the finding.) In Grandfather's home, whatever was missing, the children always depended on Lydia to find it. And she never failed them. Usually, she had seen it, and remembered where. If not, she knew where it would be likely to be, and went there for it. So many times I have heard Grandfather say, "If my sister Lydia were here, she would find it." I

think Great-aunt Lydia would be pleased, don't you, to have her sisterly helpfulness recalled so, after sixty years?

To recover one's self quickly, after an interruption, and concentrate one's faculties again on the work in hand, is as important as to learn to take the interruption itself good-naturedly. Practical newspapermen say that beginners who come to them enthusiastically recommended by friends who are sure they can "write," fail at this very point. They have been in the habit of writing behind a locked door, with a doting mother, maybe, to see that no one so much as rattled the knob. They find it an entirely different matter to write in the confusion of an office.

Misunderstandings will always be in the day's work. People do not appreciate us as we think they ought. They take snap-shots of us and call them real pictures.

You try to do a kindness, and you

are thought meddlesome. You pride yourself on looking nice at home, and the one day of all the summer that you go to the door untidy, your best friend has brought a strange girl to sit on your piazza. You oppose giving fifty cents apiece for the teacher's present, because you really think it is more than some of the class can afford, and the very girls you had in mind call you mean. You give up school and go to work, to make hard times easier for your father, and your favorite teacher regrets that you have so little persistence.

To be sympathetically understood is a great luxury, and we ought not to expect to have it often, any more than any other luxury. Most of us have one or two people whom we can count on to appreciate us and stand by us, and those are plenty. For the rest, their trifling misinterpretations of our conduct or motives ought not to give us much concern. To be constantly complaining that

one is misunderstood makes one pitiable, sometimes even ridiculous.

Failures will always be in the day's work. They are inevitable. Where so many of us are wanting the same thing, some of us are bound to be disappointed.

When Dorothy graduated, she had high hopes, as graduates always do, about the position she could get. She haunted agencies, and answered advertisements, and kept doing up her best shirt-waist overnight on the chance of being telephoned to meet a school-superintendent in the morning. As the summer wore on, the salary she was willing to take grew smaller and smaller, till finally on the hottest of the hot days, she started for a bit of a village thirty miles back, where she had heard there was to be a vacancy. In the same car were seven other girls, all with an anxious air which Dorothy, by that time, had learned to recognize. They all went on, past station after station, and got out together,

at the end of the line. And back they all came together, on the up-train, rivals no longer, but sharers in a common disappointment. By that time, they were able to make a joke of it together, and be quite merry. But it took courage to get up, next day, and begin again.

Almost harder to bear are the failures that come directly by our own fault — stupid blunders that we knew better than to make, trifling mishaps that might have been prevented if we had kept our presence of mind, awkwardnesses that we cannot think of without blushing. But they are all in the day's work.

In the queer old text-book on Mechanics that Rob laughed at so when he found it in my book-case, is a definition which means more to me now than it ever did in my high school days: "*Work is the overcoming of resistance.*" To overcome the resistance which all the petty annoyances and interruptions and misunderstandings and failures of the

day make to our good temper and our faith, and to carry ourselves courageously and cheerfully and serenely through the varying days — is not that the real "work" of life?

NEVER FEAR TO BRING THE SUBLIMEST MOTIVE TO THE SMALLEST DUTY

Phillips Brooks

ALL BEAUTIFUL SCHEMES IN THE WORLD WAIT LONG IN A SHELF LOVELY ACTION

James Russell Lowell

CoLibrì
SYSTEM